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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

by

Jerry W. Robinson, Jr.
Professor of Sociology and
Rural Sociology

October 1980

No. 80 S-18



Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
305 Mumford Hall, Urbana, IL 61801



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of the Association of Administrators of
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an operational framework for conflict management. After defining conflict and explaining how it relates to "territory," a discussion is presented on the uniqueness of confrontation, and the types and causes of conflict. Stages in the conflict cycle are presented and factors influencing the course of a conflict are analyzed. The author suggests three conflict strategies for administrators: (1) utilization; (2) prevention; and (3) management.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION
2. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT
CONFLICT AND TERRITORY
3. CONFLICT AND VALUES
FUNCTIONS OF CONFLICT: GOOD AND BAD
4. TYPES OF CONFLICTS
5. CAUSES OF CONFLICTS
6. CONFLICT STAGES
7. FACTORS AFFECTING CONFLICTS
8. ETHICS AND STRATEGIES IN CONFLICTS
ETHICAL ISSUES
STRATEGIES
UTILIZING CONFLICT: SOME BASIC RULES OF THUMB
PREVENTING CONFLICTS
MANAGING CONFLICTS: THE THIRD PARTY OR INTERVENOR ROLE
SIX STEPS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT USING INDIRECT PERSUASION
9. SUMMARY
10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Why a paper on conflict management for administrators in Home Economics? While most action programs related to Home Economics may be viewed as planned social change, they often involve or lead to conflict. Not all planned change is led by self-help or technical assistance agents. Some professionals, even home economists, advocate the use of conflict as purposeful social intervention (Alinsky, 1969, 1972) in some settings.

Conflict seems to be increasing in our modern world. It is international and inevitable (Hornstein, et. al., 1971). Those countries which espouse free enterprise, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the right to dissent shall certainly continue to have conflict (Kriesberg, 1973). Democracies are built on the foundation of an *adversary* system, and conflict is seen as having more good than evil (Coser, 1971). Also, there is a widening economic gap between the developed and developing nations of the world, and scarcity of resources leads to conflict. While many of us may prefer to live in a quiet, peaceful world, that likelihood is decreasing. We are grateful, however, that the amount of conflict on our campuses is decreasing.

DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT

Social conflict is a behavior threat by one party directed at the territory--rights, interests, or privileges of another party. The threat is usually directed toward limiting or eliminating one party's access to some resource or goal (Robinson, 1972). In conflict the goals of opposing parties are incompatible. Group and individual behavior in conflict situations is threatening because one party seeks to attain its goals or to achieve its interest with enough behavioral intensity to limit the goal attainment of the other party. It takes two or more parties to have a "good" fight.

Policies, goals, and values define rights, interests, and privileges in our society. All groups and individuals do not share commitments to common policies, goals, or values. One group may favor the development of faculty unions and another may oppose it. One group may favor tenure,

student evaluation of teaching, food additives, or organic farming, and another may oppose each. Because their goals and values are incompatible and feelings are strong, the respective groups are likely to encounter a conflict.

While values are always important in conflict situations, the essence of a conflict is the behavior threat. Behavior threats are prompted by values and goals, and directed toward policy change. Williams (1970: p. 220) writes that conflict can be studied as a "process of concrete events occurring in real time and space - not as a set of cultural patterns." While values, policies and goals are important, conflict does not become conflict until someone does something. Thus, the key ingredient in this model of conflict is seen in behavior threats. It's essences are basically behavioral actions. This approach is highly operational in conflict management/ resolution scenes. One cannot manage the feelings, frustrations, values, and goals of others; but one may be able to redirect or exert some control over behavior of others in conflict (Rubin and Brum, 1975). If one is able to redirect behavior, one can begin to reshape the course of a conflict. (See Figure 1.)

Conflict and Territory

Often conflict can be divided into tangible, concrete, or specific terms. For this reason conflict can be analyzed and simplified in terms of behavior directed at territory. Almost everyone is familiar with traditional conflicts over office space, civil rights, or religious beliefs. How do these relate to territory? The explanation lies in viewing territory as more than physical or spatial. Humans have a need for space, but why do they define the space or place called home with such sentiment (Ardrey, 1971)? One explanation can be found in an interpretation of territoriality.

Territory has a psychological dimension (Robinson and Clifford, 1972). Psychological territory is based on personal values and beliefs, on individual privileges, or even the myths that one believes. One does not have to be "correct" in his/her beliefs for them to be real to that person. Myths by definition are not true, but belief in them is real.

People own their beliefs just as they own an idea, a city lot, or a piece of furniture. Examples of psychological territory are beliefs in the superiority of one nation or one race over another, that abortion is murder, or that one religion is better than another. Trying to change, destroy or "take beliefs" away from some people can cause much conflict.

Threats

Conflict also occurs because of threats to social territory; i.e. society's role expectations for women or organizational job descriptions. If these "territories" are threatened, conflict develops. For example, certain places are just naturally reserved for "special" people at the dinner table, at church, in the parking lot, in the office, and even in the job market. Many examples of social conflict have occurred in organizations where women have moved into roles formerly occupied by men since the ERA movement gained momentum. To invade another person's "space" is regarded as socially inappropriate and it may be the precipitating event to a confrontation.

Psychological, social psychological and physical territory are not mutually exclusive. There are unique values, goals, and policies related to how people view certain symbols in our society (Sherif, et al., 1961). Territoriality is an example of how values, goals, and policies are intertwined in conflict situations and how conflict can be analyzed in terms of tangible behavior or intangible beliefs. If one analyzes a community conflict in terms of territoriality, one may be able to deal with it more effectively. It facilitates an understanding of conflict in terms of emotional and rational issues, and helps a person learn more quickly what the problem is, and who is causing it. For example, the burning of biology textbooks at a local high school can be analyzed in terms of strong commitment to social and psychological territories, to conflicts over roles of the family and the school and who has the right to teach "certain" information to children. Sometimes the values, goals, and policies underlying a conflict are objective and highly rational, other conflicts are charged with emotions and irrational behavior.

In brief, conflict involves two or more parties with incompatible goals which relate to specific value attachments. The behavior of one party is threatening to the goals and territory of the other party, and the two parties compete with varying levels of interest and power. Relative power of the parties compete with varying levels of interest and power. Relative power of the parties in the conflict is the key issue. The alternatives for resolution vary according to the power one has. Few resolutions please all persons associated with both sides of a conflict because of strong value attachments.

CONFLICT AND VALUES

The value orientation of supporters of a conflict strategy is quite contrary to the normative neutrality espoused by many educators. Normative principles are essential for advocates of social conflict. In many cases it is impossible to be neutral (Blizek and Cederblom, 1973; Laue and Cormich, 1978). Much conflict involves planned and unplanned strategies in organization development and conflict awakes both emotional and rational responses (Alinsky, 1972 b). Persons causing or using conflict make no pretense at being value free (Leas and Kittlaus, 1973). The desired change is regarded as good, or better than the status quo. Advocates using a conflict strategy are goal directed as are agents of planned social change. They see conflict as good for themselves, their respective causes and organizations.

Functions of Conflict: Good and Bad!

Perhaps we can begin to understand conflict better by listing several of its functions. Coser (1971) in his classic work summarized six functions of conflict in society.

- (1) Conflict permits internal dissension and dissatisfaction to rise to the surface and enables a group to restructure itself or deal with dissatisfactions.
- (2) Conflict provides for the emergence of new norms of appropriate behavior by surfacing shortcomings.
- (3) Conflict provides means of ascertaining strength of current power structures.

(4) Conflict may work to strengthen boundaries between groups--distinctiveness of groups.

(5) Conflict has the effect of creating bonds between loosely structured groups--unifying dissident and unrelated elements.

(6) Conflict works as a stimulus to reduce stagnation. Conflict may alter society.

Conflict has positive and negative effects upon organizational groups and individuals. A summary of these effects is seen in Figure 2.

Power, Benefits, and Change

A conflict usually begins with the basic premise that there should be a different distribution of some type of benefits to people in an organization; that one group of individuals should have a more equitable opportunity to maximize their potential. Advocates of conflict believe that subjugation of people to the status quo is wrong. Conflict, contrary to other strategies, usually involves the powerless versus the powerful. However, the powerless may not be deeply enough involved or skillful at proclaiming their needs. They may not have the time, skill, or motivation to implement and maintain an effective program of conflict. For example, one author writes that community development is often used as a pacifier in the hopes of avoiding conflict and disagreeable agitation and that most

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

community development efforts avoid issues of the distribution of benefit (Erasmus, 1968). Instead they work for the continued efficient functioning of the status quo.

While most educators and especially Extension Specialists are familiar with the science of change and much is written about it (Bennis and Chin, 1962), few write about the science of conflict as a planned process. Perhaps the emotional value orientation, and action stance of conflict prohibits this involvement. Administrators might profit considerably by urging more careful study of the work of political scientists in disputes and political change. Careful study of the basic values of justice, freedom, and empowerment might cause some to understand that conflicts are often justified, good, and even desirable before progress can occur.

TYPES OF CONFLICTS

Organizational

Conflicts come in all sorts, shapes, and sizes. Most conflicts are struggles for power and are related to justice and freedom. There are organizational confrontations which involve external forces against internal ones. Such conflicts may be induced by court struggles or other efforts attempting to get a group to comply with the values or /changes in the society. Struggles over equal employment opportunity for minorities is a classic example of external versus internal conflict.

Individual

Some conflicts arise from disputes which are precipitated because of disagreement between individuals in key power positions. Two department heads may disagree on an important issue. If their feelings are strong and concessions aren't made soon, the conflict can quickly escalate into a "college" problem. Issues such as the restoration or removal of a decaying building with a rich cultural heritage might be a problem. A powerful dean may wish to preserve the building, while a faculty member, who is active in developing a faculty union may lead a coalition of opposition favoring the spending of the restoration money for salaries.

Splits

Personal conflicts often lead to conflicts within organizations. In the above example, it is easy to see how a chapter of a local historical society or the Daughters of the American Revolution might become an advocate for preserving the old building while a committee of students with a mission to develop campus parking would lead a campaign to get rid of the "old eyesore." However, not all organizational conflicts involve different organizations. Some involve actors in one organization, i.e. the faculty may be divided on building renovation versus the improvement of classroom equipment.

CAUSES OF CONFLICTS

Change

Social and technological change in societies with a democratic form of government facilitates competition and promotes the adversary system. Change is inevitable and the conflicts preceding or following it are related to the reallocation of resources or the redistribution of power.

However, there are other factors affecting conflict because some organizations tend to have more conflicts than others. Why? What are some factors precipitating organizational conflicts?

Diversity

Diversity seems to be a contributing factor to conflict (Kriesberg, 1973). Increased economic differentiation and changes in the population composition lead to heterogenous values. These factors add to diversity on the university campus and increase the likelihood that disagreements will occur over territoriality.

Splits

Another important cause of conflict is the presence of existing splits or cleavages. Sometimes opposing power structures seem to be seeking out an issue over which to have a big fight. In some organizations there is a residue of past experiences which can be brought to front on almost any issue. This may especially be the case in organizational power.

Events

Coleman writes (1957) that significant and unique events are often the sources of conflicts. If an event such as the location of a new building touches an important aspect of the lives of enough people on a university campus and if it affects different power groups in different ways, then conflict is likely to occur.

Leaders

Other factors important to the escalation of a conflict are the presence of a committed leadership group with enough skill and feeling to gain support from groups for their point of view (Leas and Kittlaus, 1973). If they can develop a feeling of suspicion or fear, then the conflict may be on the road to becoming a widespread issue.

Dissatisfaction

A final factor which leads to the development of organizational disputes is the presence of a feeling of dissatisfaction among a group of constituents large enough to make some action (Alinsky, 1972 a). When the power structure ignores the interest of a minority, conflicts are likely to occur. Coleman (1971) writes that revolts against a power group tends to follow this pattern:

1. The administration in power becomes the defendant;
2. A few activists become continual oppositionists and opportunistic;

3. A large inactive group exists which is silent but not necessarily supporting the administration;
4. An active group for administration supports exists;
5. The large, passive group (silent majority) becomes active; and
6. The active oppositionists use the hostile atmosphere to promote their ideology and gain ends.

In essence, through this process conflicts are escalated, opponents become enemies, and disagreement leads to the development of antagonism. We shall now describe the escalation of conflicts in terms of a conflict cycle.

CONFLICT STAGES

Conflicts usually follow predictable stages or steps (Kriesberg, 1973). They begin with a threat, then move to tension development, role dilemma, injustice collecting, confrontation, and adjustment (Robinson, 1978). Each of these stages will be defined and illustrated. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Tension Development

The conflict process begins when one party feels strong enough about an issue to make a threat directed at the territory-interest, rights, or privileges of another party. If the threat is strong and the issues clear, some persons may choose sides here. Others may delay until additional information is available or pressure is applied. Sometimes threats are strong enough to generate fear and cause fear or tension development. Peabody (1971) writes that the fear caused by a threat is worse than the actual conflictual event itself!

Role Dilemma

Role dilemma follows tension development. Organizational members ask, "What is expected?; With whom should we agree?; Shall we take sides?" (Duetsch, 1958). While asking such questions they seek out information and expectations regarding changes in policy, goals, and values (Leas and Kittlaus, 1973). If the issues are clear, positions, roles are taken.

If issues are unclear, the response may be withdrawal and/or testing behavior begins. The parties may seek to determine what actions they can take and how "far they can go" without being associated with either side in the conflict. Sides are usually taken by the time this stage ends. The organization may become polarized and new groups with opposing positions appear. Often these new groups will lead to the emergence of new leaders. Conflict has a strange way of bringing out latent skills in some people.

Injustice Collection

Injustice collecting follows role dilemma and its arrival is easily identifiable. All conflicts do not progress at the same rate, so injustice collecting may occur soon after threats are made, or it may take some time for the conflict to gain enough momentum for strong feelings to be expressed. During injustice collecting the adversaries become polarized further through a process of name calling, innuendo, and public position taking. Information and emotion are directed toward weakening the position of the opponent. This information is, or can be, emotional and rational; and it may include accurate or inaccurate data which are expressed with very strong feelings. Some parties in a conflict seem to remember all previous negative experiences. They seek to weaken their adversary by itemizing or mentioning any previous injustices which come to mind, by name calling, and sometimes by revenge. When feelings are strong they may be publicized in newspapers, on the radio, or on television.

Unfortunately, when one party seeks to use injustices, the other party tends to reciprocate. Coleman (1957) writes about the tendencies for injustice collecting to reinforce negative responses in conflict actors. This behavior leads to rigid polarization. In essence, injustice collecting intensifies a conflict, reinforces negative behavior, and encourages dysfunctional criticism in all parties. This led Gresham to develop what he called the law of conflict:

"The harmful and dangerous elements drive out those which would keep the conflict within bounds; reckless and unrestrained leaders head the attack; violent organizations arise to replace pre-existing or moderate organizations; derogatory and inflammatory charges replace discussions; solving the issue becomes secondary to winning, to putting down the opponent (C.F. Coleman, 1957: 14)."

Confrontation

Some conflicts move from injustice collecting to a confrontation. (See Figure 3.) Others move to a stage of adjustment. When adversaries in a conflict see each other as enemies, they are likely to resolve the conflict through a face-to-face confrontation. People don't force conflicts to confrontation unless they have very strong feelings regarding the issue of the fight and unless they feel they will win through a confrontation. Severe outcomes are possible from any confrontation where either party is extremely aggressive. Violent confrontations often lead to the destruction of property, to the usurpation of rights and interests of citizens, and to permanent cleavages (Hornstein, et al., 1971). Severe confrontations tend to reinforce the belief among some people that conflict is always bad.

Adjustments

The final stage of conflict is the adjustment process. All conflicts do not develop into violent confrontations. Some conflicts may move quickly from the role dilemma stage to a stage of adjustment. There are at least four adjustments to conflict: domination, cold war, withdrawal-isolation and compromise (Robinson and Clifford, 1972). While compromise may be regarded as a "positive solution," domination, cold war, and isolation can have negative or positive effects depending on the opposing parties, the issue, and the type of feelings the parties have toward that particular adjustment.

Domination occurs as an adjustment to conflicts when the party with the most power imposes a solution. Because of superior social, economic, or political strength, the weaker party is forced to "give in." Domination tends to be a temporary form of adjustment to many conflicts. Since the weak party has no alternative but to comply, the conflict may reappear as soon as strength is gained.

Cold war is another adjustment to some conflicts, especially when the solution is not acceptable to either party in a conflict (Kriesberg, 1973). Cold war is a temporary adjustment. The contending parties continue to weaken each other through innuendo and injustice collecting. Cold war occurs

when: (1) the parties seem to be of equal power; (2) change would mean that they would have to surrender territory and power and lose face in the community; and (3) both parties see the change as a severe compromise. Parties in a cold war may find that a hot war may erupt any minute.

Withdrawal or isolation occurs because some parties dislike disputes. Withdrawal is often a temporary adjustment of the weaker party to avoid losing face or "psychological lynching." Isolation occurs when the "solution" to the conflict is intolerable to the weaker party. Thus, the stronger party is avoided because the "solution" imposed is more unbearable than isolation. An example was the acceptance of segregation by minority groups until strength and support for equal opportunity developed. Isolation then is not permanent. It may end when the weaker party gains strength in numbers, in economic power, or in confidence (Miller and Preston, 1973).

Compromise is generally regarded as the healthy, functional adaptation to conflict if issues are negotiable (Kriesberg, 1973). However, compromise is not managed easily. Why? Because compromise requires new definitions of territories. It redefines policies, goals, and sometimes even values. Compromise is achieved through persuasion - direct and indirect, or through an inducement and reward system which involves negotiation and bargaining (Rubin and Brown, 1975). For a compromise to a conflict to occur, both parties must be committed to a dialogue process (Duetsch, et al., 1967). They must possess enough trust in that process and in themselves to communicate openly about aspects important to them in the negotiation process (Deutsch, 1958). In some cases, much time is required. A third party may be necessary for the development of an acceptable alternative to the conflict (Leas and Kittlaus, 1973).

FACTORS AFFECTING CONFLICTS

Every conflict is unique. Organizational structure, administration skill, attitudes, and the degree of discontent, the possibility for solution, requests for assistance, the presence of a mediator, and the

problem itself are among the many important factors which influence the conflict process (Coleman, 1958; Deutsch, 1973; Kriesberg, 1973).

Administrators can shape a controversy through their skill and attitude. They may have the ability to remain calm in the midst of the developing turbulence and carefully coopt the leadership of the opposition in some situations. They may be skillful at using their authority to suppress or direct the opposition. When power brokers are able to translate a conflict into tangible and specific terms which are relevant and understandable by the rank and file, they enhance their control. When administrators manifest confidence and act with deliberate purpose they exhibit control which wins sentiment for their position.

Structure

Organization structure helps shape conflict outcomes (Warren, 1974). The nature and strength of the factions and the type of interactional networks that exist influence the nature and the outcome of a controversy. The issue may not be important to the economic situation or it may be extremely important. If the conflict is seen as being initiated by a radical group, opposition to it is likely to have a strong support base.

Frustration

When people are frustrated about something and discontent is high, conflicts escalate. The frustration may be caused by social or economic injustice and is closely tied to ideology (Hornstein, et al., 1971). Participation in conflicts is much more intense when the controversy touches the important territories of a number of people. Civil rights movements among blacks in the 60's was one example. When the ideology of equal opportunity was translated into discrimination in jobs, voting, and housing, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum and local protests emerged with force.

Issues

Specific issues help generate support but the solutions must be realistic and achievable (Phillips, 1978). Some conflict situations occur where injustice is felt and no solution is perceived. Unless resources are available to help people obtain "their" solutions, the discontent is not likely to be channeled into planned action programs. When injustice is linked with realistic possibilities for change, success of a confrontation is enhanced.

Indigenous Agitators

Another factor affecting the course of a conflict is whether the leader of the conflict group which is advocating change comes from within the organization or comes unsponsored as an "outside agitator." If change is to have a long term effect, the desire for it and major leadership for it must come from the organization seeking the change (Alinsky, 1971). If change comes through an outside agitator, it will disappear with his/her exit.

Intervenor

The presence of an intervenor or mediator also is an influencing factor on the nature and solution of a conflict. If the intervenor comes in at the request of both parties in the dispute, then his/her actual presence in and of itself is a factor which generates pressure for dialogue and "solution."

ETHICS AND STRATEGIES IN CONFLICTS

A university administrator may be asked to assist a special interest group, a group of businesspersons, who seek research support for a highly controversial food product they wish to market. Answers to this question may take time; careful controlled experiments may be involved. If the food is proven to be an edible source of protein and can be produced very economically, some livestock growers who support the university will be hurt financially. What should the administrator's role be? What are the ethical considerations for the administrator in a situation like this. Basic issues for administrators are raised by such issues. Some argue that neutrality in any form of research is a myth.

Ethical Issues

What ethical principles shall the administrator who becomes a change-conflict agent follow? Laue and Cormick (1978, p. 217-218) suggest that the professional should ask:

"Does the intervention (of conflict) contribute to the ability of relatively powerless individuals and groups in the situation to determine their own destinies to the greatest extent consistent with the common good."

They contend that humans are ends in themselves and ought to be treated as such. Instigation of conflict is appropriate if it contributes to the achievement of three basic values:

1. Empowerment - a requisite condition for individuals and groups to achieve the desired end-state of society-justice,
2. Justice - a just society is a prerequisite to the maximum attainment of freedom by all individuals in the system, and
3. Freedom - the condition which makes possible responsible choices among a number of options and the ability to live with the consequences of those decisions whereby the deepest form of meaning is realized.

Freedom is essential for meaning. Justice is the ultimate social good, and empowerment for all is essential before groups and individuals can achieve freedom and justice (Laue and Cormick 1978-218-219). Laue and Cormick state that "empowerment, justice, and freedom are ends in themselves so long as all individuals and groups are equipped to advocate their interests to similar degrees."

Strategies

The strategy used in conflict situations is determined by one's value orientation toward conflict as a viable process for change. If conflict is seen as a functional social process, one is likely to be committed to it as a useful tool to achieve the change desired. If conflict is seen as a threat to the system or the stability of the social and economic order, one is likely to oppose it and regard it as "bad" for the organization. Thus, one can easily deduct that the basic strategies regarding conflict are: to utilize it, to prevent it, and to manage or resolve it. Frameworks supporting the strategy for each orientation toward conflict are presented next.

Utilizing Conflict: Some Basic Rules of Thumb

Proponents of conflict as a functional process for change often desire to disrupt the social, economic, or power systems of an organization. Advocates of conflict represent the disenfranchised elements of organization--elements which lack power. Their position and "cause" represents that of a minority. Almost everyone who is involved in the political arena uses conflict! Conflict is seen as the only effective technique to change, so a strategy for agitation is planned.

One conflict approach that gained popularity during the 50's and 60's in the United States, was associated with the leadership of Saul Alinsky and his Chicago based "conflict school." This section draws heavily on his work (1969, 1972) and on the works of Ross (1955), Schaller (1966), Kahn (1970), Collins (1975), Coleman (1957), and Coser (1971). While the discussion does not represent any one of these particular works, it comes closest to representing the efforts of Alinsky.

Step 1: Appraise the local leadership. Once a conflict agent has assumed a leadership role, the first task is to appraise the indigenous leadership. Conflict leaders must have the ability of seeing an organization as it is and have vision to see what it could become. This vision must be both practical and translated into terms which can be communicated. Other characteristics desired of indigenous leaders are tact, courage, enthusiasm, and hard work.

The "conflict" agent must identify and involve individuals who can form an effective leadership team. Such effective power will not be found in one individual but in a small group of individuals who can work together to effect change. One individual will probably be the spokesperson for the group and must manifest tact, enthusiasm and courage in confronting the power structure. Other individuals will organize the daily details. Leaders must check that everything is done at the right time, in the right sequence, and with the necessary resources.

Step 2: Analyze the power structure: Formal and Informal. The confrontation approach, to a greater extent than any other method of social action, focuses squarely on power. Power is the name of the game and is defined as the capacity to mobilize resources for the accomplishment of intended effects (Clark, 1968). Other approaches work from the legitimization perspective, that is, they get approval of proposed projects or objectives before initiating them. The conflict approach is concerned with the redistribution of benefits. It implies a confrontation between those that have and those that have not. Peter Rossi (1970) concludes that power structures and the decision making process manifest a wide range of variation. He proposes the general thesis that the pattern taken

by the power structure is a function of political life. The greater the number of elected positions and the greater the extent of participation in the electoral process, the greater the dispersion of power among various groups.

Step 3: Analyze the situation and territoriality. Before a "conflict" agent can suggest tactics or approaches to change, s/he must understand the types of people and groups within an organization. What are their past grievances, conflicts, and areas of consensus? S/he must understand the complex territorialities which exist within departments, the social interaction of various groups, and the psychological ties which people have to the entity called the university community. Essentially s/he needs to understand the four components: (1) people; (2) territories; (3) organizational interdependence; and (4) psychological ties. Such analysis can help one to understand where allies can be obtained, which issues could be brought into the subsequent confrontation, which groups need to be neutralized, and what types of actions would be most effective.

Step 4: Stimulate dissidents to voice grievances. A Problem does not exist until people define it as such. Bringing people together to articulate their discontent creates motivation for action and helps individuals realize that their feelings of frustration are not isolate, but shared by others. Such knowledge encourages them to realize shared consciousness in their plight. Power for the poor segment of society can be found only in numbers. As people get together to voice their discontent, the amplification of their frustration becomes an effective confrontation tool. The more people that share in the issue, the more likely results will occur. It is difficult for even a highly motivated small group to achieve change unless their sentiments and objectives are shared by a large segment of the population.

Step 5: Define "a" problem. Social action, to be effective, must focus on a single issue. Such an issue may have many secondary implications, but all efforts focus on a single problem. It is particularly important in a conflict to hit at the heart of the problem, to focus on causes and not symptoms of a problem.

Step 6: Organize, organize, organize. Conflict agents usually begin by working with clientele outside of the main power structure. Thus, common organizational tactics have to be modified accordingly. Kahn (1970) comments that the key value in decision making within poor people's organizations is not efficiency but participation. He suggests that the time required to reach a decision is the amount of time it takes to educate all the members in the meaning of decision, and to involve them in the decision-making process.

A major problem in managing a conflict is size. To be effective and to allow people to participate, the size of the working organizational structure must be relatively small. In order to accomplish this, it is often necessary to break down larger units into smaller localized subgroups. It is important to understand that some people tend to be skeptical of well organized formal types of meetings and organizations. While Robert's Rules of Order may be helpful for some in promoting general participation in decision making, organizational meetings should be kept as informal and small as possible.

Step 7: Demonstrate the value of power. People outside of the power structure are skeptical of their ability to move the power structure. They have neither power, money, property, nor influence. But as Alinsky notes, they do have numbers. They have the power of people. They must learn to perceive early in the planning process the value of a large number of people working together. It is very important that the first demonstration of power succeed. This will help the clientele realize the power which they do have, the possibilities of using it, and the possibility of success in exercising their power in numbers. Alinsky (1972), pp. 27-57, lists the following 13 power tactics in his book Rules for Radicals:

- 1) Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.
- 2) Never go outside the experience of your people.
- 3) Whenever possible, go outside the experience of the enemy.
- 4) Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.
- 5) Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
- 6) A good tactic is one your people enjoy.

- 7) A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
- 8) Keep the pressure on.
- 9) A threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.
- 10) The major premise for tactics is the development of an operation that will maintain a constant pressure on the opposition.
- 11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough, it will break through into its counterside.
- 12) The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.
- 13) Pick your target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it.

Step 8: Never confront the power structure directly. When people unite on a single issue they can present a rather impressive front of power. But it is by no means greater than traditional exercise of power through money, property and influence. In any battle, if a smaller army attacks a larger army head on, inevitably the smaller army loses. In confrontation, as in military science, one tries to outflank the enemy. In the "Back of the Yards" of Chicago, Alinsky organized the meat packing workers, not to confront directly the meat barons, but to put pressure on the banks which made loans to the meat barons.

Step 9: Be realistic, compromise. It is very important that members of an organization do not become stymied on minor issues or technicalities. The major issue must always be kept in perspective and the goal of people as ends within themselves must always be kept foremost in one's mind. Minor issues and the means of achieving these goals are a secondary consideration. Alinsky (1972, pp. 24-43) listed eleven principles relevant to his means-ends controversy:

- 1) Only people from a distance moralize about means-ends.
- 2) Judgment about means-ends is dependent upon the political position of those sitting in judgment.
- 3) In war--the end justifies any means.
- 4) Judgment must be made in reference to the time, not independent of it.
- 5) Concern with ethics increases with the number of means available and vice versa.

- 6) The relative importance of the end affects ethics in choosing means.
- 7) Possibility of success or failure greatly affects ethical choices.
- 8) Morality of means depends upon whether the means is being employed at a time of imminent defeat or imminent victory.
- 9) Any effective means is automatically judged by the opposition as being unethical.
- 10) You do what you can with "what you have" and clothe it with moral garments.
- 11) Goals must be paraphrased in honorifics.

The credibility of these principles must be weighed against the basic values of justice, freedom, and empowerment, discussed earlier.

Step 10: Develop permanent organizational structure. Various tactics are exercised to achieve the stated goal. Emphasis should be put on establishing an organization comprising all of the various subgroups which can function effectively once the change agent leaves the community. This serves three purposes. First, it allows one to avoid backlash from the power structure once the change has been achieved. Second, it helps one avoid Gresham's Law of Conflict in the breaking down of the change through radical unplanned efforts, and third, it provides for a group to carry on in the absence of the "outside agitator."

Step 11: Begin again. Once the stated objective has been achieved the clientele need to reassess what other changes they could realistically attempt to better their life situation. At this stage, the "conflict" agent will help the leaders indigenous to an organization assess their situation, assess what they have achieved, and assess where they might go from here. The experiences derived from the exercise of planning change through the conflict approach should provide administrators of organizations with the experience and ability to carry on in the future.

PREVENTING CONFLICTS

Prevention strategies tend to be used primarily by the power structure which has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo or in promoting a change in such a manner as to not disrupt the status quo.

Some of the same strategies used by the "conflict agent" may be used by the preventer - organize, plan, etc. However, there are other tactics which may be used because the preventor is seeking to work quietly and with great subtlety to keep an issue from becoming a conflict. This section will present some basic strategies which are used to prevent organizational conflicts. However, the reader must be cautioned about the success of prevention strategies. Conflict is not easily stopped. It may be suppressed for a while, or temporarily neutralized, but once a "good" conflict gains momentum, it tends to run its course through the stages in the conflict cycle.

The basic problem with the prevention of conflict is timing. The sooner action is taken to prevent an issue from moving past stage 2, role dilemma of the conflict cycle, the better. Delaying action gives a dispute time to gain strength and support and provides opportunity for differing opinions to be solidified. Efforts at preventing conflicts are almost futile if an intervener does not appear before the injustice phase of the conflict cycle arrives.

What are some tactics which can be used to prevent a conflict? Cafferella (1978) suggests the following: fragmentation, cooptation, outside expertise, education, and public relations. Each of these requires resources and skill, and may have ethical problems. Each of these tactics is operationalized in the following discussion.

Step 1. Fragment the conflict. Fragmentation involves reducing the proposed issue or project to a series of smaller components. (Williams, 1976). These components may then be introduced to the organization in an order of increasing significance of importance. By "piecemealing" the relevant information, the nature of the total shock is reduced. The smaller components do not have the explosive effect that one big issue would have. For example, instead of introducing a plan for massive budget cuts with great economic and social expense, one might begin to talk about careful program evaluations and priority funding for effective teaching, research

and public service. In fragmentation, the big issue in a conflict is reduced to a small number of very tangible and manageable problems. The issue is reduced to rational, concrete terms and experiences which can be understood.

Step 2. Coopt the leadership. Cooptation involves the redirection of the key leadership to another issue. Cooptation may have ethical connotations for the administrator who seeks to use it. When the power structure is using cooptation, it asks the key person or group which is beginning to create a conflict to serve on a study or planning committee to investigate the issue being debated and to report back to the established planning committee. Since this committee may be appointed by leaders in the power structure, the efforts of the opportunistic can be redirected. When a report or suggestion for change occurs, it can be modified or squelched. It may seem that the establishment was the group which initiated the change since they appointed the study committee.

Step 3. Employ outside experts who espouse established position. Experts who are critical consultants or national figures may be brought to a university to win over the opposition if they support "your" point of view and if the opposition holds the expert in high esteem. The power of the expert probably lies within the esteem held by the constituents rather than in the power of his/her knowledge or information. Heroes such as movie stars and professional athletes, are used frequently in advertising and political campaigns. Heroes are used in higher education, too.

Step 4. Conduct an educational program. Education is a strategy often used by the establishment to prevent conflicts or to win over the opposition in a conflict. Educational programs are more effective when they are directed at specific issues or at individual and organizational policies and goals instead of values. Values change slowly. Policies and goals change before values change. Thus, educational programs are most effective when they are developed in pragmatic terms around a particular issue and/or project. However, education may not be as helpful as some believe. Lane (1977) says that "power always whips truth" in conflict situations, especially on civil rights issues.

If an educational program is to be used in preventing conflict, it must be very rational and unbiased and directed at the individuals and groups who question an issue. Effective educators in conflict situations are knowledgeable on the subject of interest, truthful, and fair. They must know the limitation of their information, be confident and tolerant in conflict situations, and be communicative.

Step 5. Implement a "PR" campaign. Another strategy which may be used to prevent or, preferably, to avoid a conflict is a carefully devised public relations campaign. Some university conflicts begin when faculty read the headlines of their morning newspapers. The role of media and advertising in conflict (Coleman, 1957) is an important one. Public relations involve the "selling" of a proposed project. It usually means the presentation of only that information which supports one side of an issue or project.

A "good" public relations campaign uses all of the prevention tactics. Outside experts may espouse the issue or project, educators may present programs on the benefits of the change, and any opposing leaders may be put to work (coopted) studying the impacts of the change. Memos, news releases and faculty meetings discuss the benefits of the proposed change in concrete, specific terms which are easily identifiable and within the realm of experience of the citizenry.

Managing Conflicts: The Third Party or Intervenor Role

Management of conflict is probably the most appropriate role for the university administrator. Since conflict is inevitable, coping with it creatively is essential. In recent years numerous agencies and organizations have been established to help manage conflicts. A list of some is found in Table 1.

Conflict intervenors are more effective when they can play third party roles. Methods which can be used by a third party to manage conflict are coercion, contingent reward, and persuasion. If the third party uses coercion, s/he must possess the power to enforce an adjustment to the conflict. A dean may say to competing faculty, "If you people cannot agree on one solution, I will not approve any request." The threat without power to implement it is meaningless.

What criteria does one use to decide whether to become involved in a dispute? The actions of the intervenor...should contribute to the proportional empowerment of powerless groups for social change and promote the ability of the weaker parties to make their own last decisions. The rationale for an intervenor's decisions should be conscious, explicit, and public, and s/he should not claim to be neutral. Intervenors should not lend their skills to empowering groups who do not hold the values of empowerment, freedom and justice for all peoples, regardless of race, sex, religion or national origin. In fact, an intervenor should place a high value on working against such groups (see Lave and Cormick, 1978, pp. 220-222).

Advantages of Having an Intervenor. As a third party, the mediator facilitates increased rationality in discussion. S/he asks open-ended, non-judging questions which require advocates to deal with their feelings and the issues in a conflict situation. Through this strategy the mediator facilitates the exploration of alternative adjustments and issues. The mediator assures that an open two-way system of communication exists. The

Table 1 About Here

mediators can help to regulate the psychic and social cost of a conflict. S/he helps to create an atmosphere whereby an individual or group can make a "graceful" retreat if they desire to change their position or withdraw. The mediator, at the earliest stage of a conflict management dialogue, helps the adversaries develop a set of ground rules of procedure and s/he reinforces those norms. The mediator might help the adversaries secure additional resources (informative, economic, or physical) needed to manage a conflict.

Incentives. The third party can use contingent reward in some situations; e.g., s/he may give approval to all efforts by both parties to accommodate. We are familiar with the use of bribes and incentives by adversaries in a conflict. An administrator may offer attractive awards to a department to squelch a conflict or gain a favor. Incentives can be used by third parties who are seeking to manage a conflict.

Incentives may be extended to obtain accommodation from the adversaries. For example, a university president who is a third party may say, "If you will just stop fighting and get together on where to build the laboratory, I will ask the State Board of Higher Education to provide funds for it." Incentives will appear to be bribes unless they are extended equally and fairly among all parties in a conflict.

Indirect Persuasion Role Expectations. The third party who uses contingent reward and coercion is likely to experience more difficulty in conflict management than the one who uses indirect persuasion. Rather than enforcing or buying an adjustment, the user of indirect persuasion facilitates the development of mutual accommodation. S/he enforces agreed-upon rules of fair play. Instead of advocating a specific solution, s/he advocates dialogue and encourages the development and maintenance of a dialogue process. In essence, the user of indirect persuasion is an intervenor who is not an advocate for a particular party, but for both parties. The indirect persuader is not an advocate for a particular outcome, but for a process of discussion, negotiation, and adjustments. The goal of the indirect persuader is to mediate the conflict in such a way that both parties "win.." A basic premise of indirect persuasion is that adversaries are much more likely to support adjustments to conflicts which they help to create. Indirect persuasion facilitates the process of adversary involvement in solution building.

Third Party Qualifications The mediator must understand the nature of conflict if s/he is to help adversaries develop adjustments. The indirect persuader must be able to interpret conflict theoretically and operationally and have some understanding of group process and experience in working with groups. A mediator must be able to seek and accept feedback evaluation about the usefulness and effectiveness of his/her techniques and behavior upon group action in the conflict situation. The ego of the third party must not be on stage in the outcome of conflict management dialogue.

The role of the third party is regarded by some as similar to the role of a referee. As such, s/he must be fair, alert, active, objective,

skillful, decisive, insightful, and at times forceful. Lees and Kittlaus espouse this position. In their insightful book, Church Fights (1973, pp. 55-67), they discuss the qualifications for an effective third party mediator (referee). The third party: (1) has a high degree of tolerance for ambiguity, ambivalence and frustration; (2) is competent in conflict management and refereeing; (3) can advocate process, sometimes firmly; (4) does not take sides on an issue; (5) does not take substantive conflict personally; (6) must give credit to all parties; and (7) is able to express and accept strong feelings.

Lees and Kittlaus (1973, pp. 67-72) list the following as third party assumptions: (1) conflict is inevitable and resolvable; (2) conformity is not required; (3) few situations are hopeless; (4) one party affects another; (5) each side has a piece of the truth; (6) there is some similarity between opponents; (7) present problems are the ones to solve; (8) the process is of great importance; and (9) there is no right answer.

Six Steps for Managing Conflict Using Indirect Persuasion

There are six steps or strategies (Robinson, 1978) which a third party uses in indirect persuasion: (1) initiate dialogue; (2) involve both parties; (3) assimilate information and feelings; (4) reinforce agreements; (5) negotiate differences; and (6) solidify adjustment. These steps and appropriate sub-steps are listed in Figure 4. It is important to note that these steps are dependent, not mutually exclusive, and that adversaries cannot proceed to step five or six until agreements are achieved on the first four steps.

These steps of indirect persuasion place the major responsibility for developing solutions upon the adversary parties in conflict. Group consensus is more easily obtained through solution guiding than solution giving. Remember, people support adjustment they help create.

SUMMARY

This paper has presented an operational framework for understanding conflict and conflict management strategies. We began with a behavioral definition of conflict and explained how conflict usually involves a "fight

for social, psychological, and physical territory." Since conflict is not a value free approach, we discussed its uniqueness, the types of cooperation which may occur, the functions and causes of conflict, the conflict cycle and factors affecting the outcome of a conflict. Three basic strategies for dealing with conflict are presented (1) utilize it; (2) prevent it; or (3) manage it in a "How to do it" framework. Ethics for using conflicts are discussed and qualifications for third party indirect persuaders are presented. The author leaves the "selection" of a strategy to the reader and the situations which in his or her organization

TABLE 1. ORGANIZATIONS WHICH PRACTICE CONFLICT INTERVENTION

- * Community Relations Service,
U.S. Department of Justice
 - * The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service
 - * The Institute of Mediation and Conflict Resolution,
New York, New York
 - * The Community Disputes Services Division of the American
Arbitration Association, New York, New York.
 - * The Community Conflict Resolution Program, University of
Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri
 - * The Center for Teaching and Research in Disputes Settlement,
University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
 - * The Department of Law, Justice, and Community Relations,
United Methodist Church, Washington, D.C.
 - * The Office of Environmental Mediation, University of
Washington, Seattle Washington
-

Figure 1. AN OPERATIONAL MODEL OF SOCIAL CONFLICT

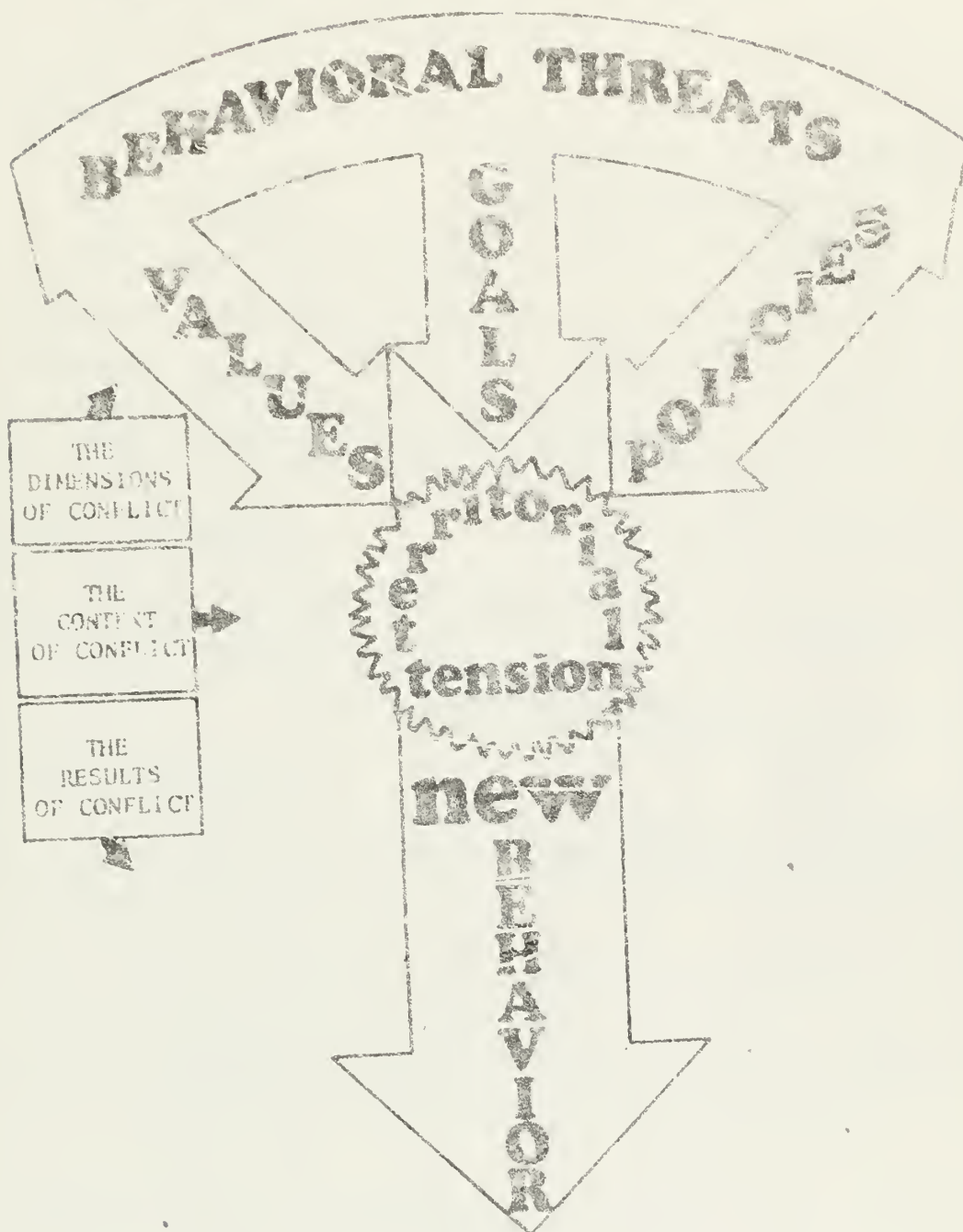


Figure 2. Effects of Conflicts

A. How Conflict Affects Groups

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Defines issues	Increases animosity
Leads to resolution of issues	Leads to destruction and bloodshed
Increases group cohesion	Leads to intergroup tension
Leads to alliances with other groups	Disrupts normal channels of cooperation
Keeps groups alert to member's interests	Diverses member's attention from group objective

B. How Conflict Affects Individuals

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Learning	Inactivity
Energy	Confusion
Creativity	Stress
Change	Violence
Growth	Diversion

/

STEPS FOR THIRD PARTY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT USING INDIRECT PERSUASION

I. INITIATE DIALOGUE OBJECTIVELY

- A. Introduce subject of process to all parties
- B. Establish ground rules for everyone
- C. Channel communication (use feedback - may have to dramatize it)

II. INVOLVE ALL PARTIES

- A. Question, stimulate
- B. Listen actively
- C. Accept, credibility of feelings (avoid judging), and
- D. Probe for causes of feelings.

III. ASSIMILATE FEELINGS AND INFORMATION (use newsprint)

- A. Record, structure and organize feelings
- B. Record, structure and organize facts
- C. Record, structure and organize agreements
- D. Record, structure and organize disagreements

IV. REINFORCE AGREEMENTS

- A. Right to agree or disagree
- B. Reality of feelings and expression
- C. Possible compromises sought
- D. Footnote solutions suggested
- E. Personalize alternative solutions in relation to benefits

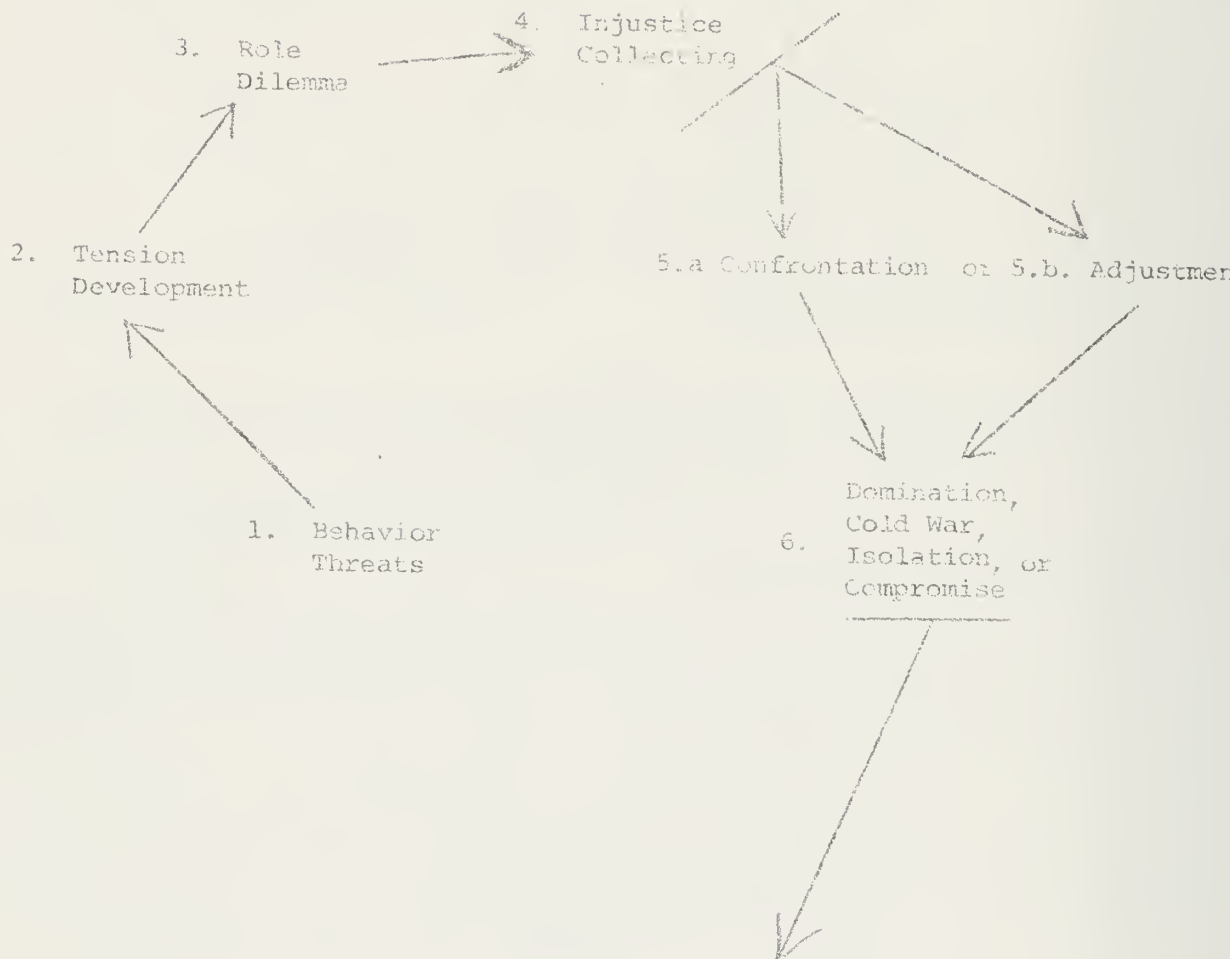
V. NEGOTIATE DIFFERENCES

- A. Discover how each party feels about issues and why (See Step III, A)
- B. Record, structure and organize disagreement (See Step III, D)
- C. Prioritize differences (get consensus) and begin with smallest problem
- D. Seek adjustment on each issue:
 - 1. Seek alternatives from each party
 - 2. Specify acceptable and unacceptable alternatives
 - 3. Review and pursue adjustments
- E. Process ground rules for third party at this step.
 - 1. Avoid solution giving
 - 2. Remember to use feedback, timing and reinforcement
 - 3. Be sensitive to loss of face
 - 4. Avoid threats

VI. SOLIDIFY AGREEMENTS (ADJUSTMENTS)

- A. Review compromises suggested
- B. Prepare contract summary
- C. Check for accuracy of perceptions
- D. Confirm areas of agreement and disagreement
 - 1. Handshake or hug
 - 2. Prepare and sign written contract

Figure 3. Steps in the Conflict Cycle



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